

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of: Eric NEYRET et al.

Confirmation No.: 6832

Patent No.: 7,138,344 B2

Application No.: 10/671,813

Patent Date: November 21, 2006

Filing Date: September 25, 2003

For: METHOD FOR MINIMIZING SLIP LINE
FAULTS ON A SEMICONDUCTOR
WAFER SURFACE

Attorney Docket No.: 4717-7800

REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.322

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Sir:

Patentees hereby respectfully request the issuance of a Certificate of Correction in connection with the above-identified patent. The corrections are listed on the attached Form PTO-1050. The corrections requested are as follows:

Column 4, line 54, delete "500°" and insert -- 50° --. Support for this change appears at page 6, line 31 of the specification.

Column 6, line 52 (claim 9, line 2), delete "500°" and insert -- 50° --. Support for this change appears in application claim 9.

Column 7, line 13 (claim 19, line 1), delete "sup" and insert -- slip --. Support for this change appears in application claim 19.

The requested corrections are for errors that appear to have been made by the Office. Therefore, no fee is believed to be due for this request. Should any fees be required, however, please charge such fees to Winston & Strawn LLP Deposit Account No. 50-1814. Please issue a Certificate of Correction in due course.

Respectfully submitted,

11/29/06
Date

Allan A. Fanucci
Allan A. Fanucci (Reg. No. 30,256)

WINSTON & STRAWN LLP
Customer No. 28765

212-294-3311

**UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION**

PATENT NO.: 7,138,344 B2
APPLICATION NO.: 10/671,813
DATED: November 21, 2006
INVENTOR(S): Neyret et al.

Page 1 of 1

It is certified that an error appears or errors appear in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Column 4:

Line 54, delete "500°" and insert -- 50° --.

Column 6:

Line 52 (claim 9, line 2), delete "500°" and insert -- 50° --.

Column 7:

Line 13 (claim 19, line 1), delete "sup" and insert -- slip --.

predetermined time interval. During an initial portion of the time interval, heating is conducted at a relatively low heating rate. During a final portion of the time interval heating is conducted at a relatively higher heating rate, and this process minimizes slip line faults in the surface of the wafer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other aspects, goals and advantages of the invention will become apparent upon reading the following detailed description of the invention with reference to the drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a graph illustrating a curve of the temperature T over time t of a conventional Rapid Thermal Annealing (RTA) process.

FIG. 2a is a graph of the temperature over time of a conventional RTA process that proceeds in a continuous manner.

FIG. 2b is a graph of the temperature over time of an RTA process according to the invention.

FIG. 3 is a graph plotting the number of slip lines that result on four wafers after RTA processes are conducted at four different time interval and temperature conditions.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The invention concerns a surface treatment process for a semiconductor wafer that has been obtained via a transfer technique, and in an implementation the process includes a rapid annealing stage. The rapid annealing stage includes a first temperature rise to a higher initial temperature, a first pause or halt to stabilize the temperature, and a second heating stage to a target higher temperature. The second heating stage occurs for a predetermined time interval. The heating during an initial stage of the time interval is relatively low, whereas the heating during a final portion of the time interval is relatively high. The wafer may be made from silicon, and may be an SOI wafer.

In a preferred embodiment, the halt after the first heating stage takes place at a temperature of about 750° C. In addition, during the second heating stage the range of temperatures of the initial portion of the time interval is from about 800 to about 1100° C. Further, the second heating stage ends at a temperature of about 1150 to 1250° C., and near the end of the final portion of the time interval the heating rate is about 25 to 50° C. per second.

FIG. 2a shows the change in temperature over time during a conventional RTA process, and FIG. 2b shows the change in temperature over time during an RTA process according to the invention. Both FIGS. 2a and 2b concern RTA annealing of an SOI wafer, wherein the SOI wafer was formed using a transfer process that included detachment along a zone of weakness (such as by using a SMART-CUT® type process). However, the present technique also applies to wafers obtained via any type of transfer process (for example, by using an ELTRAN® type process or some other method), and to wafers other than those having an SOI type structure. The process thus applies to silicon wafers, or to wafers made of other semiconductor materials.

The temperature increases shown in FIGS. 2a and 2b correspond to two different RTA processes, wherein the example process illustrated in FIG. 2b is carried out according to the invention. The temperature increases of both processes begin in generally the same manner, with a first ramp of temperature increase R1 taking the wafer to a temperature value of about 750° C. A first constant tem-

perature halt or pause (at a value of about 750° C.) follows the first ramp. As can be seen in these figures, the difference between the two annealing processes lies in the second ramp R2 of temperature increase, which follows the end of the first pause. In fact, the second ramp shown in FIG. 2a is substantially rectilinear, and has a constant slope of about 50° C. per second. Further, the conventional RTP process of FIG. 2a ends with a halt or pause of about 1 to 30 seconds, during which the temperature is maintained at a constant value of about 1200 to about 1230° C.

As shown in FIG. 2b, the second ramp R2 of temperature increase is not rectilinear. Rather, this second ramp R2 has a generally concave shape, meaning that it generally extends below the straight line that joins the point P1 to the point P2 (represented as a dotted line). The point P1 is at the start of the second ramp R2 (which corresponds to a temperature of about 750° C.) and the point P2 is at the end of the second ramp (which corresponds to a temperature of about 1150–1250° C.).

In particular, the first portion of the second ramp R2 has an average slope of a first value within a first, low range of temperatures, and a second portion of the second ramp R2 has an average slope of a second, increased value within a second, high range of temperatures. In other words, during the temperature increase of the second ramp, proportionally more time is spent initially for a given temperature rise (first range), than during the latter part of the ramp (second range).

In addition, the second ramp R2 of the present method is associated with a duration Δt_2 of temperature increase that is greater than the duration of the temperature increase of a second ramp during a conventional RTA process corresponding to the same difference in temperature. Referring to FIG. 2b, the duration Δt_2 corresponds to the time difference between the point P1 (at the start of the second ramp R2) and the point P2 (at the end of the second ramp R2).

For illustrative and comparative purposes, a dotted line representation of a conventional ramp R₀₂, as practiced according to the state of the art, has been included in FIG. 2b. This conventional ramp R₀₂ starts at the same point P1, but ends at point P₀₂, which is different from that of the point P2 and precedes it in time. Thus, as compared to the dotted line representation of the rectilinear conventional ramp R₀₂, the second ramp R2 according to the present method is concave and has an average slope which increases between two successive ranges, and additionally includes a slower overall temperature rise.

More precisely, in the conventional RTA process example of FIG. 2a, the second ramp has a slope which increases uniformly progressively and continuously. The slope of the RTA process of the present invention successively has the following values: 10–15–25–50° C. per second. In contrast, the rate of the ramp in FIG. 2a is unchanging and remains at 50° C. per second. Ramp R2 in FIG. 2b has different slopes and only ends with a maximum slope of about 500° C. per second so that its overall rate is less than 50° C. per second.

An important characteristic of the ramp R2 is that it allows the wafer to spend an increased amount of time in the range of low temperatures, which starts around 750° C., before the ramp ends at a temperature of about 1150–1250° C. In the present example shown in FIG. 2b, the low range of temperatures correspond to temperatures in the range of between about 800° C. and about 1100° C.

It is to be noted that the time spent by the wafer undergoing RTA is increased in a low range of temperatures of the second ramp as compared to a conventional RTA process. This increase is “absolute”, in the sense that the time

actually spent in this low range is increased in comparison with that of a conventional RTA process. The increased time spent can also be considered in relation to the second ramp in general. It is noted that according to the present method, during this second ramp, the ratio of the time spent in the low range of R2 to the time passed in the high range (which corresponds to temperatures of the second ramp that are greater than the temperatures in the "low" range) is increased in comparison with that practiced in the state of the art. In other words, according to the invention, more time is spent in this "low" temperature range of the second ramp as compared to the total duration of the second ramp than in the annealing stages of the linear ramp as per the state of the art. In fact, during the second ramp, the average slope of temperature increase has a first value within the first range of "low" temperatures and then increases within the range of "high" temperatures. The ranges of "low" and "high" temperatures are defined according to the material of the wafer.

It is also possible to implement the invention with another "second ramp" that starts from the moment that the condition regarding the ratio of time spent in the low and high temperature ranges explained above occurs. It is for example possible to define an intermediate constant temperature pause or halt in the range of low temperatures (for example a halt at a temperature between 800 and 1100° C., in the example described here). Generally speaking, it is possible for the second ramp to take any form which allows this condition to be fulfilled. Proceeding in a manner according to the present process allows the number of slip lines on the wafer after annealing to be substantially reduced.

It has been observed that the slip lines engendered on the supports of the wafer in an oven are considerably reduced (whether these supports have the form of separate points of support, or of a continuous circular ring, concentric to the wafer). This effect is explained by the fact that the slip lines observed in the wafer at the end of RTA originate in faults that occur during the part of the RTA process that corresponds to the "low" temperature values. This effect is illustrated in FIG. 3, which represents the number of slip lines produced on a wafer after annealing, for four conditions of RTA carried out on four respective wafers.

Referring to FIG. 3, the four annealing stages correspond to the series of points spread out along the abscissa, wherein each different abscissa corresponds to a separate annealing process. Lines of data appear below the graph. The first line of "time" data indicates, for each annealing process, the time spent in the range of "low" temperatures of the second ramp R2, and the four annealing processes including the same first ramp R1, similar to that of FIG. 2b. The second line of "Average" data corresponds to the number of slip lines observed on a population of wafers, after annealing. The third line of "Count" data indicates the number of wafers on which the slip lines have been counted (this number being limited to one in two cases). It can be observed that as the "time" increases, the number of slip lines decreases. The table below sets forth the results obtained:

Time passed in the low temperature range (in seconds)	Average number of slip lines observed
7	46.5
14.5	30
19	14
26	6.5

In the example of FIG. 3, the range of "low temperatures" extended between 800 and 1100° C. As described, the application of a second progressive ramp of RTA, which corresponds to a high ratio (time spent in the "low" temperature range to the time passed in the "high" temperature range), is thus beneficial for reducing the number of slip lines.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for minimizing slip line faults on a surface of a semiconductor wafer that has been obtained using a transfer technique, which comprises:

heating such semiconductor wafer from an ambient temperature to a first higher temperature;

pausing the heating at the first higher temperature for a time sufficient to stabilize the wafer; and

further heating the wafer from the first higher temperature to a target higher temperature during a predetermined time interval, with the further heating during an initial portion of the time interval being conducted at a relatively low heating rate and heating during a final portion of the time interval being conducted at a relatively higher heating rate to provide additional heating time compared to a heating time provided by a constant heating rate to thus minimize slip line faults in the surface of the wafer.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the further heating during the predetermined time interval is not uniform and is conducted at an overall rate that is less than 50° C./sec.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the further heating continuously increases from the low heating rate to the high heating rate.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the low heating rate is conducted from more than 50% to about 80% of the predetermined time interval and the high heating rate is conducted from about less than 50% to about 20% of the predetermined time interval.

5. The method of claim 1 which further comprises pausing the heating during the initial portion of the time interval and then resuming heating.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the ambient temperature is room temperature and the first higher temperature is about 700 to 800° C.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the low heating rate of the further heating is conducted from the first higher temperature to an intermediate temperature of between about 800 to about 1100° C., and the high heating rate of the further heating is conducted from the intermediate temperature to the target temperature.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the target temperature is about 1100 to 1300° C.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the high heating rate of the further heating is about 25 to 500° C. per second

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the wafer is made of silicon.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein the wafer is an SOI wafer.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein the first higher temperature is about 700 to 800° C.; and the further heating is to a target higher temperature of about 1100 to 1300° C. and with the relatively low heating rate conducted to an intermediate temperature of about 800 to 1100° C.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the low heating rate is conducted from more than 50% to about 80% of the predetermined time interval and the high heating rate is conducted from less than 50% to about 20% of the predetermined time interval.

50°

7

14. The method of claim 12 which further comprises pausing the heating during the initial portion of the time interval and then resuming heating.

15. The method of claim 12 wherein the first higher temperature is around 750° C. and the target temperature is in the range of about 1150 to 1250° C.

16. The method of claim 12 wherein the high heating rate of the further heating is about 25 to 50° C. per second.

17. The method of claim 12 wherein the wafer is made of silicon.

18. The method of claim 12 wherein the wafer is an SOI wafer.

slip 19. In a method for minimizing slip line faults on a surface of a semiconductor wafer that has been obtained using a transfer technique, wherein the wafer has been heated from an ambient temperature to a first higher temperature and a pause has been taken at the first higher temperature for a time sufficient to stabilize the wafer, the improvement comprising further heating the wafer from the first higher temperature to a target higher temperature during a predetermined time interval, with the further heating during an initial portion of the time interval being conducted at a relatively low heating rate and heating during a final portion

8

of the time interval being conducted at a relatively higher heating rate so that the overall heating time is longer than an overall heating time when heating is conducted at a uniform heating rate at 50° C./sec to thus minimize slip line faults in the surface of the wafer.

20. A method for minimizing slip line faults on a surface of a semiconductor wafer that has been obtained using a transfer technique, which comprises:

heating such semiconductor wafer from an ambient temperature to a first higher temperature;

pausing the heating at the first higher temperature for a time sufficient to stabilize the wafer; and

further heating the wafer from the first higher temperature to a target higher temperature during a predetermined time interval, with the further heating during an initial portion of the time interval being conducted at a relatively low heating rate and heating during a final portion of the time interval being conducted at a relatively higher heating rate to thus minimize slip line faults in the surface of the wafer, wherein the further heating is conducted at a non-rectilinear heating rate.

* * * * *